THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Policy envisaged grant of concessions to new industrial units and units undertaking substantial expansion. These include investment subsidy, transport subsidy, interest subsidy, exemption from income tax and excise duty etc. In pursuance of this policy, Notification nos. 32/99-CE and 33/99-CE, both dated 8.7.99, were issued by Ministry of Finance. Notification No.32/99-CE provides exemption from excise duty to goods cleared from industrial units located in specified areas in the seven NE States. Similarly, notification No. 33/99-CE exempts goods cleared from specified industries in these States irrespective of their location.

(c) No, Sir. The benefit of excise duty exemption has been withdrawn only in respect of tobacco products including cigarettes, in view of reports of misuse of exemption.

(d) Several representations, including those from Chief Ministers and Members of Parliament, have been received for restoration of excise duty exemption to tobacco based industries and the matter is under examination.

**Dearness Allowance**

2877. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of Dearness Allowance due for payment to the Central Government employees w.e.f. 1st July, 2003; and

(b) the steps taken by Government to release the payment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central Government employees is revised twice a year from 1st January and 1st July payablee with the salary for the months of March and September respectively. The revised amount of DA will be notified at the appropriate time.